

Labor in Focus by Stephen Parsons

Unionbusting and violence in Toledo

The onslaught against labor should bring no joy to business—it is designed to inaugurate the “post-industrial age.”

The incidents—described in press reports as “the worst labor violence since the 1930s”—that hit Toledo, Ohio on May 21 were actually a major escalation in the war to wreck American labor, business, and industry. It was a conspiracy designed by the *Toledo Blade* newspaper and its anti-industrial cronies to jerk the knees of every free enterpriser and right-to-work advocate into a class warfare-style attack against labor.

When 100 police stormed into a crowd of 3,500 workers who were demonstrating outside the AP Parts plant in Toledo in support of the company's locked-out union members, the *Blade* and other media played the incident as an anarchic labor riot, with the labor movement shifting beyond mere economic demands that imperil the “recovery” and toward violence that threatens the economic and social fabric of the nation.

But exactly the opposite is true. The city of Toledo has been targeted for the most brutal union-busting drive since the 1930s, as a model for a national operation to destroy labor unions and workers' standards of living and to put the coffin nails into America's industry.

What the press called a labor riot was actually set off by the security goons hired by the AP parts management, which has been out to break the union and impose massive wage cuts for months. At a press conference May 24, the presidents of the Toledo Firefighters Union and Patrolmen's Benevolent Association blamed the Nuckohls, Inc. “security” squad hired by

AP for the display of violence.

“They are goons,” said Firefighter head Paul Horn. “They deliberately provoke and taunt the strikers. They wanted violence. They are responsible. The wisest thing that AP could do would be to fire those goons.” Police union leader Bill Dunn added that Nuckohls had a known record of inciting violence in labor-management disputes. “These goons fan the flames themselves,” said Dunn.

The union, Local 14 of the United Autoworkers, was forced to strike May 2 when AP Parts imposed wage and benefit cuts of up to \$5.84 per hour upon the expiration of their labor contract. The company threatened to move the plant south as the twin to its already non-union shop in North Carolina, and began to hire scabs at bargain-basement wages.

AP Parts' labor-management relations head Richard Deming said he had expected a strike much earlier. On March 5, the company, a major supplier to General Motors, abrogated its labor contract and implemented 170% speed-up on the production lines. Two tiers of barbed wire were strung up around the plant, two new “observation towers” constructed at the plant perimeter, and 40 security guards, armed with baseball bats, were brought in from Nuckohls, Inc.

The demonstration was called only after the company refused to seriously negotiate with the striking union—which had already accepted major wage cuts—and brought in more than 250 strikebreakers to man the factory.

The rally was tense but peaceful,

until the police captain in charge fired a tear gas cannister. The missile hit a worker's leg, and the violence erupted. Forty-one workers were arrested. Most were charged with aggravated assault and, in some cases, were kept locked and chained in vans for three hours.

In a recent interview with *EIR* investigators, Ken Gavin, a spokesman for the Toledo Chamber of Commerce, emphasized that “one way or another, the wage structure must be lowered to make Toledo competitive.” He made clear exactly why when he praised one Randall Root, the author of *Toledo Towards 2000*.

Root is a peddler for the worst of Toledo's “conservative” anti-industrialists, led by *Blade* publisher John Block, a devotee of the British aristocracy and of population reduction. Root's report, produced according to Block's specifications, makes explicit the connection between union- and business-busting by prescribing for Toledo the “creative destruction” of factories, a “move from the Industrial to the Information Age.”

“I agree with Gary Hart,” Root told our investigators. “Unions must make major concessions [because] industry must be competitive. We have seen the passage of the era of good and plenty. . . . Steel mills? A steel mill is an expression of national macho; it is not necessary to have so many steel companies. . . . The nature of warfare has changed. It is not hardware-intensive but information-intensive.”

The AP Parts violence occurred 50 years to the week after the famous Toledo Auto-Lite strike of 1934. Like that event, which marked a milestone in labor organizing during the Great Depression, the AP violence presages the emergence of a new strike wave by Americans who are resisting the “post-industrial society” onslaught against both industry and labor.